

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MAPUTO 00377 291510Z
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CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: MORG, MPOL, MZ
SUBJECT: COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE LAW

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY HAS
LEGISLATED TWO YEAR COMPULSORY NATIONAL MILITARY SERVICE FOR ALL
MOZAMBICANS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 45 (40 FOR WOMEN). A
MILITARY CENSUS IS SCHEDULED FOR MAY THROUGH JULY, 1978 TO
DISCOVER AND REGISTER THOSE SUBJECT TO SERVICE. FIRST PRIORITY
ARE MEN AND WOMEN 17 TO 21 YEARS OLD WHO HAVE NOT SERVED IN THE
ARMED FORCES (FPLM)

2. MILITARY OBLIGATION CAN BE FULFILLED BY SERVICE IN THE FPLM.
SECURITY SERVICES, OR NATIONAL DEFENSE AND RECONSTRUCTION
SERVICES, POSTING IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTRY
OF DEFENSE. THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED WILL BE CLASSIFIED AS
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PAGE 02 MAPUTO 00377 291510Z

RESERVISTS UNTIL THEY REACH THE LEGAL MAXIMUM AGE OF 40
OR 45.

3. THERE WILL BE DEFERRALS FOR STUDENTS AND FOR THOSE
RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPORTING FAMILY MEMBERS UNABLE TO WORK.
MEDICAL HANDICAPS ARE THE ONLY GROUNDS FOR EXEMPTION
SPECIFICALLY, THE LAW REQUIRES MILITARY SERVICE OF ALL

REGARDLESS OF SEX, RACE, ETHNIC, ORIGIN, RELIGION, SOCIAL POSITION, OR PROFESSION. AFTER THE TWO YEARS OF SERVICE THE LAW GUARANTEES VETERANS THEIR PREVIOUS JOBS AND PRIORITY ON RENTAL OF HOUSING.

4. FAILURE TO COOPERATE WITH THE MILITARY CENSUS IS PUNISHABLE BY FINES OR IMPRISONMENT. ALL CITIZENS WILL IN THE FUTURE BE REQUIRED TO CARRY DOCUMENTS (DRAFT CARDS) AND PRESENT THEM WHEN ASKED BY AUTHORITIES.

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5. COMMENT: NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE LAW IS UNPOPULAR WITH AT LEAST THE EDUCATED SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION. WHITE MOZAMBICANS WHO HAVE TAKEN MOZAMBICAN NATIONALITY IN SPITE OF ENTITLEMENT TO PORTUGUESE CITIZENSHIP ARE UNDOUBTEDLY RECONSIDERING THEIR DECISIONS.

6. THE ONLY IMMEDIATE REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW IS REGISTRATION THROUGH THE CENSUS. MOZAMBIQUE HAS MANY MORE CITIZENS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 45 THAN IT CAN POSSIBLY TRAIN OR AFFORD TO KEEP IN THE MILITARY. ESSENTIAL SERVICES WILL BE CRITICALLY HURT IF SKILLED PEOPLE ARE CONSCRIPTED. THEREFORE, THE DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE SYSTEM OF EXEMPTIONS WILL BE CRUCIAL

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PAGE 03 MAPUTO 00377 291510Z

IN ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF NEW LAW.

7. OBLIGATORY CONSCRIPTION BY THE PORTUGUESE WAS ONE OF FRELIMO'S BEST RECRUITING TOOLS. THOUSANDS OF MEN SUBJECT TO THE NEW LAW HAVE ALREADY SERVED IN THE PORTUGUESE COLONIAL ARMY. IT WILL BE A IMPORTANT POLITICAL TEST FOR FRELIMO TO ADMINISTER THE LAW FAIRLY AND TO MINIMIZE RESISTANCE. THE RECENT TAX LAW (SEPARATE AIRGRAM) AND THIS CONSCRIPTION LAW REFLECT THE GOVERNMENT GROWING CONFIDENCE IN ITS ABILITY TO ENACT LONG PLANNED, BUT POLITICALLY UNPOPULAR PROGRAMS.

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